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Grand Junction specialist honored for decade of weed eradication

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – A resource specialist with the Bureau of Land Management's Grand Junction Field Office has been recognized statewide for his work to eradicate noxious weeds in western Colorado over the past decade.

BLM Natural Resource Specialist Mark "Sparky" Taber was awarded this year's "Excellence in Riparian Management Award" during the Colorado Riparian Association's Annual Conference in Avon Oct. 4-6.

Taber was recognized for his tireless and innovative efforts to rid riparian areas of noxious weeds, which can have a devastating impact on wildlife habitat if left unchecked. Among Taber's many accomplishments over the past decade, he designed a special "weed raft" to reach infested areas with no road access. He helped lead the effort to cut down hundreds of invasive Russian olives and tamarisk trees along the Colorado River in Ruby/Horsethief Canyon, then helped devise a drip system to water the cottonwood trees planted in the campsites along the river.

Currently, Taber is a key player in the Dolores River Restoration Partnership – a coalition of private, federal, state, and county entities working to restore riparian areas along the Dolores River between McPhee Reservoir and the confluence of the Dolores and Colorado rivers just north of Moab, Utah.

"Sparky possesses a wealth of knowledge, tremendous creativity, and is relentlessly committed to getting things accomplished at the ground level," said Grand Junction Field Manager Catherine Robertson. "He has made a huge difference in keeping riparian areas healthy."

Taber started his career with BLM in the fire program in 1993 as an engine foreman. He earned a bachelor's degree in natural resource management from Colorado State University in 1983.

The Colorado Riparian Association is a group of landowners, agency staff, citizens, planners and technical specialists working together to improve Colorado's river systems and riparian ecosystems.

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